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ABSTRACT

Writing is an act of self construction. Considering how students process information can improve the quality of instruction in composing courses, but only if quantifiable, verified models of cognitive functions are taken to heart and applied to teaching methods in the classroom. C. G. Jung's model of the four functions (thinking, sensation, intuition, and feeling), and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (developed to discern preferences of cognitive style of thought) are useful for two reasons: (1) the model's empowering and self-orienting descriptions of cognitive functions is richer and more complex than other cognitive functions models, and (2) the model offers a useful guide in helping students understand their writing problems in the classroom. The four functions model predicts that people will show a significant preference for certain kinds of information processing; will be predisposed to compose using certain well-developed skills and to ignore others; and will usually have predictable writing habits, both good and bad, that can be penetrated by using the Cognitive Functions Model to group and work with individual students. This model also works well in cross-cultural classrooms, since it is a westernized version of a universal metaphor for seeking "wholeness." (A model of the four functions and 27 references are attached.) (MM)

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Thinking, Feeling, Intuiting and Sensing

Using The Four Psychological Functions as a Model to Empower Student Writers

Lori Ann Miller

The Typology

Writing is an act of self construction. As teachers of composition, we are in the business of engaging students in this act -- with all of its multiple, diverse and complex operations. Cognitive processing models can be reductive and we still know more about the difficulties of developing and discovering why models are not accurate descriptions of the complex nature of the mind than we know about how the mind approaches the complex task of composing (Rose 1988). Yet, my experience in the classroom tells me that teaching students to consider *how* they process information can improve the quality of instruction in composing courses -- but only if we take quantifiably verified models of cognitive functions to heart, as well as to mind, and learn how to apply these to our teaching methods in the classroom.

I want to recommend using C.G. Jung's model of the four functions, and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator later developed to discern preferences of cognitive styles of thought for two reasons: first, its empowering and self-orienting description of cognitive functions is richer and more complex than other cognitive functions models (ie. field dependence model, or right/left hemisphere processing, etc.). That is, its focus on becoming self aware of our own cognitive processing mechanisms implicitly invites us to become self conscious facilitators of our students'

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individual strengths, weaknesses and composing behaviors. Secondly, the model offers us a useful guide to helping students understand their writing problems in the classroom as we work both with individuals and with groups. It describes and predicts a variety of tendencies in the pre-writing, planning, outlining, focusing, and revision stages of writing which can help us see the right kinds of questions in terms of the significant individual differences we observe as we work with students. The four functions model says that people will show a significant preference for certain kinds of information processing, will be predisposed to compose using certain well developed skills and to ignore others, and will have different preferable writing habits, some good ones, some bad ones, that we can better penetrate if we use the Cognitive Functions Model to group and work with individual students.

In my opinion, C.G. Jung was one of the great minds of the twentieth century, one whose insights we have not yet truly recognized. I believe we are only now beginning to employ and research the questions his work implicitly and explicitly raises about the nature of mind, and that such research will yield tremendous richness. I predict that the models and concepts he sets out will live long beyond trendy models that come and go with the decades. Jung's description of the four cognitive functions, upon which the MBTI is based, was developed as a client-centered description of cognitive functioning -- how the mind typically intakes, stores and processes incoming

experiential data. Basically, it says that human beings process information along two dimensions -- one which, by distancing itself from the phenomenon being experienced, determines the meaning or value of that experience and the other which is direct or experiential. The two poles of perceiving from a distance with discernment are called thinking and feeling -- which is a kind of thinking, in the model, only a thinking which derives from different cognitive sources than the thinking function. The other two poles, the experiential ones, say we are either paying attention to the physical evidence in the material world or in the body -- the sensation function -- or we are using intuition. Recent research (Keirsey & Bates, 1984) has yielded some interesting statistics regarding type preferences and percentages in the population. For example, a large percentage of those who teach in higher education (about 65%) are NTs -- intuitive thinking types. Much of our undergraduate student population, on the other hand, is composed of STs and SFs. In the population as a whole measures indicate that only 15% prefer Intuition, while the other 85% typically prefer the Sensation function. These statistics suggest that we in higher education must pay close attention to our students in order to really help them become better writers because many of them will not relate to our ways of doing things.

These four points (see hand out) describe the clusters of psychological functions or skills upon which we consistently draw upon to process information (both internal

one external) at all times. And although we all have all four functions to draw, the model says that we are implicitly gifted with one which is "superior," two which develop over time as auxiliary functions, and one which is decidedly "inferior." What makes the inferior function inferior is not its quality but its quantity -- the relatively little amount of time we spend using that function to experience and make sense out of things. If we can "type" ourselves and our students along these lines, then we can examine their writing process in terms of the skills they are readily able to use and those that are under developed.

Each of the functions should be used during composing a paper. However, the "superior" function will predict certain predispositions regarding the challenge of writing. For example, thinking types (T) like to think for the sake of thinking, and will typically preplan their papers well and write for the sake of expressing ideas. The feeling function (F) determines the value of a thing, an idea or an experience. It is not emotional -- it is discerning. And what it discerns is "I like that." or "That doesn't feel right." It chooses topics because the writer "can relate" to them or because they are appealing. Primary feeling types often structure their points according to a different *kind* of logic, and at a different pace, than those using the thinking function. The sensation function (S) directly experiences things in the world, and its attention is riveted to that sense data, which includes visual, auditory

and kinesthetic body experiences and the physical, material world generally. Primary sensation types describes things well, attend to the step-by-step process of getting a job done, and pay close attention to instructions. The intuition function (N) has the capacity to read the atmosphere, to look around the corner, to consider what is not seen or invisible. Primary intuitive types love to find unseen links, imagine new vistas, create unusual associations. We all have all four functions, and move rapidly from one to another, consciously or not, when we compose. What this model says is that each of us will primarily use two of the four functions -- one discerning function and one experiential function -- and will typically give less attention to or even delete the kinds of writing produced by the other two (and especially the "inferior") functions.

As Jensen and DiTiberio (1984) have pointed out, there are distinct similarities between students grouped according to their two strongest or most developed functions -- one from the experiential and one from the discerning pole -- and these similarities, when charted, help students to begin to sort out the contusions, clarify for themselves what their real strengths are, and begin to look at where they might begin to improve their writing.

Applications in the Classroom

In the advanced expository writing courses I teach at the University of California, I've grouped students into

four groups according to the Kiersey-Bates short form MBTI (see handout) -- into NTs, NFs, STs, and SFs. I group them this way to let them explore, together, what they might have in common as writers. This has yielded some interesting and suggestive results. My primary interest is in which cognitive functions are actually being triggered and employed, and in what order, by the writers the majority of the time. In the classroom, I simply present the model, describe the functions as cognitive processing skills, and ask them to write a paper on how they compose a paper. They bring it to class, and begin to analyze common points, differences, and the model itself. This generates a tremendous amount of discussion about mind, models, and composing as a process. After each critical essay assignment on whatever topic, we take time out, again, to describe to each other what happened when we composed the paper. Students learn from each other, and find themselves exploring new strategies as they work over the term.

My students have come up with the following kinds of observations about themselves as writers, based on the enhanced attention and self awareness produced by exploring their composing process self consciously over time and by placing themselves in the grid of the cognitive functions model.

Thinking Intuitive types (NTs) have in common the capacity to brainstorm and to come up with numerous ideas in response to an assignment. They are often multi-draft writers and are rarely short on ideas. Primary intuitives

with strong auxiliary thinking (NTs) can have problems focusing precisely because they have so many good ideas that they can't pick which one to talk about, or they can have difficulty explaining the links between their ideas. One of my NTs said to me, in frustration, "But I resent having to explain that -- I mean, they should think of the examples themselves! It's the idea that is the exciting part of it." NTs say they are likely to be writing for themselves, especially as beginning writers, because what interests them is the ideas and how to put them together and creatively link them. Primary thinking types with auxiliary intuition (xTs) say they are a little different than primary intuitives. They say they are usually able to outline their ideas and get organized. They say, however, that they can find themselves writing incredibly digressive, long-winded tracts on nothing of any particular value to anybody but themselves. Neither of these orientations is likely to consider its audience, and is primarily interested in the power of the ideas themselves and how these are best structured and linked together.

Intuitive Feeling types (NFs) on the other hand, say they are often hesitant to select a topic. nFs say they must wait because the topic must "feel right" to them -- if the topic doesn't feel good, they won't be inspired and they won't be able to write. The nFs are the ones likeliest to wait, finally get one good idea, let it incubate, and, sometime later, sit down and write out what they have to say. They write slowly, and pause often, searching for the

"right" word, and rarely write more than one draft. If intuition is the superior function, with strong auxiliary feeling, however, (NF) the composing process may look more like that of the NT -- lots of ideas, lots of brainstorming, and lots of creative links. When it comes to structure, NFs and NTs often report feeling disorganized, or putting off thinking about how to order the points they want to make. Mature NTs can be perfectionists, when it comes to writing, requiring of themselves the perfectly structured piece. Usually, however, they consider fewer structural options than other types. One primary feeling type told me that he just didn't want to think about structure because "all that stuff makes my head hurt." He really felt a more organic structure would be "better for my audience." My Intuitive students all report that they often use ideas from many sources, and find it downright tedious to try to track these down as they write. They "grab" ideas from the sky, and use what comes. Some Intuitive types wonder when they'll "get caught" copying others' ideas, and self confidence can be an issue if students are not taught to respect the intuition and acknowledge their sources.

Sensation Thinking types (STs) say they prefer to be given a topic to write on and do not like the more creative "discovery" writing assignments. These students see themselves as sturdy, logical and usually serious writers, many of them taking time to think things through well after having received good, orderly direction from the instructor. STs say they do not appreciate it when they are told to just

"make something up," because they don't know what that means -- either things are there, or they aren't! These students report that they want direction, step by step descriptions and exact details. Many STs can start a paper by writing out the examples. STs can produce dull, toneless or otherwise plodding prose -- and are often most comfortable with the 'voiceless' report style. They are curious, however, about so many things, that they are often the most willing experimenters once they get started with revision strategies. sTs are often curious and interested in exploring new writing strategies, and will think carefully about how to restructure their essays once they begin to suspect they are not considering audience needs. Or they will begin to enjoy "listening to hunches," as one sT put it.

Sensation Feeling types (SFs) report the same kind of preference for detail and direction, but with the unique distinction of considering, usually first and foremost, "what this example will tell my reader." As one Sf said, "It's the examples that are the most fun to write!" sFs (and nFs) are likeliest to write audience-centered pieces because it is communication with the audience, and not the idea, that fascinates or challenges them. They need a topic they "like" or can "relate to" and they report that it is quite difficult for them to know, at first, especially, what the "big picture" might be. If the feeling function is superior, they will hesitate all during the composing process, looking for the "right" word and example, and are

likelier to be one-draft writers. At the same time as these writers are good at orderly detail and focusing on their audience, they can miss the "big picture," or the context in which their examples might be placed in order to make a larger point.

It seems to me, then, that students using this model have clearly shown its richness, diversity and its tendency to encourage self awareness and exploration of new writing strategies. I think, therefore, that we should use Jung's cognitive functions model as a frame of reference to explore one-versus multi-draft writers (Harris, 1989), writing blocks (Bartholomae, 1986), pre-writing stages (Witte, 1980), revision strategies (Sommers, 1980), why some writers pause during composing (Flower and Hays 1981) and our own preferences in teaching writing. It might explain why Elbow (1972) recommends intuitive discovery style writing, and why Steinberg (1980) prefers sensation-oriented process description in terms of developmental strategies. I believe we will find meaningful differences in all these arenas depending upon our ability to locate the cognitive function preferences of the writer, and the order in which they are employed. I predict, further, if my experience is correct, that there are also developmental patterns for each of these types and that maturing writers learn to access the third and, finally, the fourth functions -- in this order, as they develop their writing skills.

Applications for Teaching Writing

I think the reason for the richness and diversity I've experienced in teaching this model is that it does not categorize or box us in. But invites us to move in the other direction -- toward developing more cognitive tools, and toward appreciating those that we haven't yet begun to appreciate. What I teach, then, is really the nature of mind in composing (or in anything, for that matter) to students who rapidly become more eager to discover more about how this all works. The students are curious, often afraid, sometimes obstinate, at first, but almost all of them become engaged, finally, in themselves and their process. So the course, whether at the freshman or senior level, is really about how to write. It's not about grammar, or about rhetorical strategies, but about mind: mind as it writes. We explore ourselves, our thinking processes, and compare our different and often opposing views of experience, what we notice about that experience, and why we take to be valid what we take to be valid in the experience at hand.

Typologies have their limitations. But if we are primarily interested in how the mind of the writer is operating, then we present questions, not answers and we present opportunities for self awareness, challenge and growth. This gets us back to where we should be -- to how the mind itself is functioning, and to which cognitive functions are being used to compose a paper. Using Jung's typology of the four cognitive functions invites classroom

applications in small group work that make draft workshops into magical self discovery experiences for students. Hence this model is not just an intellectual description of cognitive functions but contains empowering and extraordinary tools for self discovery -- for ourselves, as teachers, as well as our students. And teaching self discovery means that we ask ethical questions and are not prey to the accusations of those who claim that cognitive psychological models attempt to rise above the ethical concerns inherent in teaching humanities courses and composing, in particular (Berlin 1988).

Cross Cultural Connections

I think that Jung's model works so well, in part, because it is a westernized 'empirical' version of a universal metaphor for seeking "wholeness." This universality is further testament to its open-ended applications. For example, the Hindu teach four distinct paths to samadhi, or "freedom" of the soul (Nikhilananda 1968). Jnana yoga -- the path of wisdom and discrimination parallels the thinking function. Bhakti yoga is the path of devotion, the path of the heart which parallels the feeling function. Parallel to the sensation function, the western pole, Karma yoga focuses on working and taking action in the physical world. Fourth, raja yoga is the path of meditation, a way of looking to the metaphysical, to things "not seen" for self discovery and parallels the intuitive function.

Another cross cultural use of the four-pointed description of paths to wholeness is the Native American Indian Medicine Wheel (Storm, 1972). The North is Wisdom. The South is the place of innocence and Trust, and for perceiving closely the nature of the heart. The West is the looks-within place, which speaks of the Introspective nature of man in a body. The East is the Place of Illumination, where we can see things clearly far and wide. And here is the "teaching" of the Medicine Wheel::

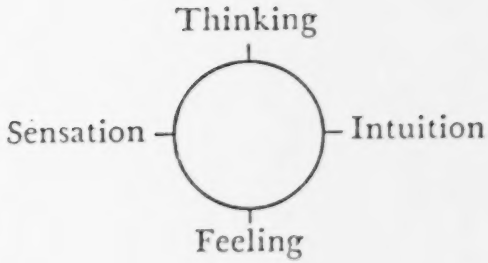
> *At birth, each of us is given a particular Beginning Place within these Four Great Directios on the Medicine Wheel. The Starting Place gives us our first way of perceiving things, which will then be our easiest and most natural way throughout our lives. But any person who perceives from only one of these Four Great Directions will remain just a partial man....After each of us has learned of our Beginning Gift, our First Place on the Medicine Wheel, we then must Grow by Seeking Understanding in each of the Four Great Ways. Only in this way can we become Full, capable of Balance and Decision in what we do* (Storm, 6-7).

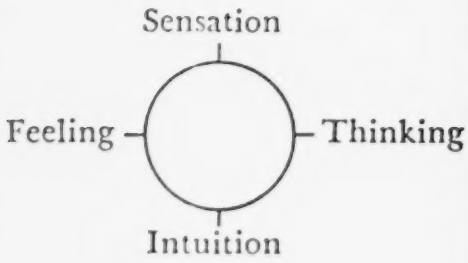
The four functions and how they operate in our own individual mental and emotional reality-structuring systems are keys, then, to self knowledge. The better we know ourselves, the better we write, and the more apt we are to help others avail themselves of the accuracy and self observation that the model encourages. It is a tool for the development of critical thinking skills, creativity, and most importantly, for self understanding. It is a potential key to wholeness, to wisdom, to self acceptance, to the acceptance of others as they are, and to understanding more about how we work in the world, how we project our dreams onto it, and how reality itself is structured by our perceptions of it.

Conclusion

To conclude, the context in which I believe we need to place cognitive psychology and the use of Jung's model of the four functions in teaching writing is as a catalyst to help us explore our teaching methods and to engage with students as they explore the perceptual frameworks in which they live and work as writers. It expands the level and quality of communication in draft workshops and is extremely helpful for understanding how we go about evaluating the writing of others. Most importantly, it provides the grounds on which we and our students can go beyond our current limitations and grow -- not only in terms of skills but in terms of depth, expanded awareness and that quality of knowing which encourages us to take a stand in that aspect of self creation which is the act of writing. We become people in the act of creating ourselves.

THE FOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS





Short Form Types Test:
Keirsey, David and Marilyn Bates. Please Understand Me: Character & Temperament Types. Del Mar, CA: Gnosology Books, 1984.

Other Useful Resources:
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